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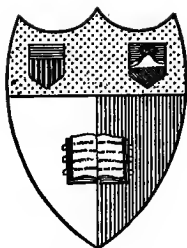


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The Guilds and the Salary-Earner.

What is the Salariat?

“The Salariat,” whatever its etymological defects, is a very useful term to describe a certain section of the community. The distinction between persons paid by salary or fee and those paid by wages may be criticised on economic grounds, but it is amply justified by its significance and convenience for purposes of social analysis. Let us endeavour to envisage the various classes of people who come under the general designation of the salariat.

There are professional men, such as lawyers, doctors, and ministers of religion; the technical and executive officers of industry (engineers, chemists, works managers) and the administrative and clerical staffs of commerce—bank and insurance officials, managers, travellers, clerks, etc.; the staff of the public services (civil servants, local government officers, naval and military officers, teachers); while journalists, actors and musicians are also included.

It will thus be seen what a number of important interests is covered by the term. So far as one can characterise the salariat it may be described broadly as the class responsible for the “organisation” of industry and commerce and for the administration of the public services. The degree of responsibility differs of course widely within the class, including as it does the general manager of a vast industrial concern or the permanent head of a Government department at the one end of the scale and a school attendance officer or a junior clerk at the other end.

While it must be recognised that the control of policy and considerable influence in administration is exercised by capitalists through boards of directors and otherwise, it nevertheless remains truer than most generalisations to say that the salariat is the organising group in each industry or service and therefore a vitally important unit in that industry or service.

The foregoing broad facts are cited to introduce two subjects with which this pamphlet will attempt to deal: (1) the attitude of the salary-earner to his own special interests; (2) the relation of the salariat to the rest of the Community.

The Organisation of the Salariat.

Although, as has been indicated, the salariat is a fairly well marked social group, it has very little organisation as such.

There are, however, numerous sectional associations (such as the British Medical Association, National Union of Teachers, Society of Civil Servants, Association of Engineering and Ship-building Draughtsmen, National Union of Scientific Workers, etc.), of various types and there is a tendency illustrated in the recent formation of a National Federation of certain of these associations towards greater cohesion and a more definite policy among the salariat as a class. Professional organisation has undoubtedly received a great impetus as part of the general social awakening resulting from the war. Some professional organisations largely confined before the war to technical education and examination have been led by force of circumstances to enlarge their scope to deal with the economic interests of their members. In other cases new and more progressive professional associations have been formed to deal specifically with those interests. Many professional associations have recently taken the form of trade unions (local government officers); some have in fact always adopted that form (actors, draughtsmen). It should of course be obvious that the cost of living problem and the political and economic factors which produce that problem are of as vital concern to the salary-earner as to the manual worker, but the weak organisation of the salariat has hitherto left that class in a relatively worse position than that of the well-organised manual workers. Some attempt has been made to create a middle-class organisation, but such an attempt must inevitably fail because of its vague policy and its failure to recognise the clear distinction between those who depend for their living upon their own exertions and those whose incomes are derived from the exertions of others. In other words, the term "middle classes," so far as it admits of definition at all, includes such heterogeneous and conflicting classes (tradesmen and capitalists as well as professional men) that no permanent common basis of union can ever be found among them. The members of the salariat, on the other hand, have the common characteristic that their livelihood is directly dependent upon their own exertions, and that the purchasing value of their income is dependent upon prices which are in turn governed by the operations of the landlord, the capitalist, the trader, and the organised manual workers. This basis of interest is only just beginning to be understood and appreciated, but the setting up of the National Federation of Professional, Technical, Administrative and Supervisory

Workers is a significant indication that the salariat is about to attain self-consciousness and the means to work out its own salvation. This Federation, consisting as it does of most of the more progressive and influential professional associations (with a membership approaching half a million), will undoubtedly exert a big influence upon the policy and fortunes of the salaried worker.

The immediate problem before the salariat is so to adjust its relations to the proprietary classes on the one hand and the manual workers on the other hand, as to safeguard its material interests consistently with the general interests of the community. The proprietary classes (i.e., those whose income is derived not from their personal exertions, but from the possession of land or capital) occupy much the same position to the salariat as they do to the manual workers. It is true that salaried workers have the advantage over the manual working class of greater security of employment; the former being engaged not by the hour or day, but usually by the month or quarter. They are generally not penalised for sickness or absence from work for other unavoidable cause as are manual workers. These conditions while they give the salariat a slightly better status do not alter, although they somewhat obscure, the fundamental social realities. In other words, professional and manual work may be broadly regarded as merely different forms of labour, differently remunerated and having a different status, but essentially similar from an economic point of view.

The remuneration for professional work is subject to the same laws of supply and demand, modified by professional or trade union organisation, as in the case of the manual worker. (Prior to the full development of capitalism it was frequently possible for members of the salariat to pass into the proprietary class: but the gradual absorption or control of the small scale business has almost closed this door). It should of course be recognised that the wealthier members of the salariat are sometimes owners of land or capital to a small extent, but in bulk the amount of capital or land so held represents little more than a reasonable provision for domestic contingencies and the revenue therefrom in most cases bears an insignificant proportion to the total income of the salariat; this therefore does not affect the main argument, which may be resolved into the simple propositions that the income of the salariat being paid by the capitalist employer for services rendered is subject to the same fluctuations as wages: i.e. it may be diminished by unregulated competition for employment or increased by effective labour organisation, and that salaried employment is governed by the same fundamental consideration as wage employment—its profitableness to the employer.

The improved organisation and more militant policy of the salariat have met with the unconcealed dismay and opposition of the employers. The spectacle of insurance officials, teachers,

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business and his rule was almost unquestioned. To-day however, the individual employer has lost much of his power. The struggle is now between the powerful inter-industrial combinations of Capital and Labour—a struggle in which the former is endeavouring to enlist the aid of the coercive machinery of the State.

The extent to which the State control of labour, etc., would be resisted by trade unions is a matter of speculation, but it is probable that many capitalists would regard a State guarantee of their interest sufficiently attractive to run the risk of labour opposition which has proved so little effective against a determined capitalist Parliament. State Capitalism would be as deplorable for the salariat as for the manual worker. To both classes it would sound the death knell of every idea of industrial freedom or social justice.

The Alternative to Capitalism.

In the face of this dark alternative to our present industrial system, a body of public opinion has steadily grown up in support of another alternative—National Guilds, and it is urgently necessary that the professional man, as well as the manual worker, should seriously examine the claims of the Guild idea to be considered as a more efficient and more desirable alternative than either Private or State Capitalism.

The great strength of Guild Socialism is that it is based on existing institutions and could be achieved without violence, without the dislocation of either industry or commerce or finance, and without injustice to any member of society. This is not to say that profound social changes are not implied in it: it would scarcely be worth striving for were this not so. The nuclei of the Guilds of the immediate future already exist in the industrial unions of the manual workers and the professional organisations of the salariat. For many years the original craft trade unions among the manual workers have been combining and giving place to unions based on industry, and these amalgamations have attained tremendous economic power in many leading industries, such as railways, coalmining, engineering, iron and steel. Less dramatic, but equally significant, has been the growth of organisation, largely on industrial lines, among the professional workers.

It is in the combination of these two forces, the wage earners and the salaried workers, that the hope of the future lies. An organisation for each industry; the Guild, comprehensive enough to contain all the workers in that industry, whether manual, clerical, technical, professional or administrative, would contain all the personnel necessary for the running of the industry. Autho-
rised by the community, it could control factories, machinery, offices, and all necessary equipment. In conjunction with other Guilds it could obtain its raw materials and transport and distribute its products. Thus would be brought together: labour, capital, and raw material—all the requisites for production.

The useless but dangerous private capitalist and the evils of the system in which he flourished, are alone left out of the picture.

One of the characteristic features of the Guild State would be the divorce between the ownership of the industrial capital and the conduct of industry. The former is vested in the whole community; but the actual management of each industry or service is entrusted to the organised workers in that industry. The production of commodities and the performance of social services would be organised on the basis of ascertained needs, thus solving the economic problem of relating employment and production. Employment would be continuous but production would be automatically adjusted to known requirements, thereby avoiding the periodic crises of unemployment which are an inevitable accompaniment of private capitalism.

Almost equally important from an economic point of view is the increased efficiency which would arise from the substitution of a co-ordinated national organisation in each industry, for the innumerable unconnected and competing private firms which now exist. This co-ordination would be effected without in any way destroying the initiative of the individual workshop or office. Subject to the production by each regional guild of its quota of goods or services it would be left largely autonomous as regards method of production. A similar principle would no doubt apply to the relations between the regional guild and the local guild which would be intimately acquainted with the capacity and suitability of the local personnel and equipment and thus be able most efficiently to allocate to them different branches of work. There would in fact be much greater opportunities for specialisation and research under the Guild than there are to-day and this would also tend to increase and improve production. As will be shown later, the introduction of self-government into industry will profoundly modify the motive and conduct of the worker whose self-respect and obvious interest will demand a higher standard of work than can possibly be expected or achieved under private capitalism.

It is, however, the idea of self-government in industry which is the most characteristic sign of the Guild, and which, indeed, should prove its most attractive phase to the salariat. It need hardly be said that self-government does not mean mass meetings to decide questions of technical procedure. What it does mean is that every worker would be a "citizen" in his own industry, with a voice in its general policy, a share in its local administration, and an active responsibility in conjunction with his fellow workers for the efficiency of his workshop or office. That there would be free scope for ability and ambition to rise to the highest posts in the industry, and that the rendering of useful social service would replace private profit-making as the aim in industry. The appointment of directors' relatives to the "plums" of the industrial and commercial world, and the flagrant political

patronage which has often disgraced the public services, would alike disappear, with the other unjust privileges of wealth. The entrance of a person to a particular industry or even to a more responsible post in that industry would be judged by the Guild according to the needs of the Guild and the qualifications of the individual. The actual constitution of each Guild cannot be predetermined in detail, nor is it necessary or probable that there will be uniformity in such constitutions. As a general principle, however, it may be assumed that while the general management of the industry will be vested in a Council representative of all grades in agreed proportions, each group of workers (e.g. technicians, clerks, etc.), will have wide autonomy in settling its own working conditions. In addition to this general and sectional machinery, provision would also have to be made for geographical organisation so that there might be the largest possible measure of devolution consistent with the efficient operation of the industry.

A typical Guild - Building.

It will best illustrate the practical application of Guild principles to sketch the outline of a Guild in a particular industry. The Building Industry is selected for this purpose not only because it is an industry which is the subject of great public interest at the moment but because it is possible to draw not merely upon abstract theory but upon a large measure of practical experience in support of the proposals made. Indeed it may be useful before discussing what may be anticipated as the eventual Building Guild to give a brief note on the present experiments which are laying the foundations of that Guild.

A typical regional Guild at the present stage is the Guild of Builders (London) which has been set up on the initiative and with the hearty co-operation of the Building Trade Unions and has already secured several important public contracts. The management of the Guild is vested in a Committee which is made up of representatives elected by the architects and surveyors group, representatives of the several crafts elected by their respective trade unions, and representatives of the building trade workers in the several districts covered by the Guild—irrespective of craft. Other approved groups, e.g., electrical engineers and clerks are also eligible for representation. The officers of the Guild consist of the General Manager and Secretary, in charge of the general administration, the Accountant, responsible for the financial and costing arrangements, and a Surveyor in general control of the technical operations of the Guild. The three officers were appointed by the Committee. In each district covered by the Guild there is a Local Committee consisting of representatives of the local branches of the Unions and Associations of the workers in the industry. The Local Committee has a large measure of autonomy in managing the local affairs of the

Guild, such as the provision of the necessary labour for any local "job" and is responsible for the appointment of the general foreman for any job in the locality. The foremen in each trade are either appointed by the representatives of their trade on the local committee or by the local branch of their trade union.

Guilds for other regions in the country have been and are being set up on similar lines, the first having been established in the Manchester area. These guilds are now being linked up in a National Guild, the management of which will be conducted on somewhat similar principles to those adopted by the regional guilds, e.g., the fullest possible autonomy to each section of the guild in the government of its own affairs and the pooling of resources for all matters of common concern. The National Guild will not undertake the actual building of houses but will be mainly concerned with the provision of credit and other financial facilities, the purchase of materials and other co-ordinating activities on behalf of the regional guilds. An important immediate function of the National Guild will be the organisation of the scheme for continuous pay for all Guild workers which is such a distinctive feature of guild employment.

A further illustration of Guild working may be given in the contract made by the London Guild with the Walthamstow Urban District Council for the construction of 400 houses at the nett cost of the labour and materials, plus 6 per cent. for plant and administration expenses, plus £40 per house for "continuous" pay. The work on this contract has been characterised by a spirit of goodwill among all grades of workers (manual and non-manual) by their more enlightened attitude towards their work, and by the novel experience in the Building Trade of security of employment: and these factors have resulted in a greatly increased quantity and quality of production as compared with that of the employees of the ordinary profit-making contractor. This and similar experiences elsewhere afford much valuable confirmation of the Guild contention that work willingly undertaken because it is done under self-determined conditions and for the public service will be done better than work grudgingly done under dictation and for the profit of a private employer. The removal of the fear of unemployment, in particular, has had an exceedingly powerful influence in freeing production from many restrictions which are inevitable in a competitive and frequently overstocked labour market.

The eventual National Guild for the Building Industry will doubtless grow out of these experiments and will gradually absorb the present private concerns, their working employers included if they are willing. While mainly concerned with the construction and repair of houses, it would also be responsible for the construction of public works, such as harbours, bridges, etc., and would be charged with the conduct of associated trades such as the manufacture of cement, bricks, etc. The Guild

would consist of all the persons working in the industry, including architects, civil engineers, surveyors, managers, clerks of works, foremen, accountants, clerks, bricklayers, masons, carpenters, painters, plumbers, brickmakers, cement workers, labourers and the many associated craftsmen. Most of the manual workers concerned are already well organised in strong trade unions linked together in a Building Trades Federation. The salaried workers are less well organised, and are not linked together. The architects, engineers and surveyors are mostly members of their influential professional institutions, while many clerks of works, foremen and clerks are in associations or unions, but at present the professional and administrative elements in the building industry have not attained much collective consciousness and still less any regular contact as such with the manual workers in the industry. This situation is, however, in course of modification partly as a result of the influence of the Building Guilds and partly due to other causes such as the better organisation of the salariat. So soon as the salariat is ready for the step, we may hope to see a National Guild executive, with representatives from the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Institution of Civil Engineers and the Surveyors Institute side by side with representatives of the clerks, foremen, craftsmen and labourers, taking that broad view of its responsibilities and possessing that technical and spiritual capacity to cope with them which Guildsmen believe to be the natural outcome of self-government in industry. In each region of the country and in each locality we would have similarly constituted committees with more detailed functions, but with the same "team" spirit. Lastly, but most important, we should find the individual worker, whether he be surveyor or bricklayer, working with that zest and efficiency which only comes with freedom and just conditions, and proudly conscious of his membership of a great self-governed public service.

The sort of organisation thus briefly illustrated in the Building Industry could of course be applied, with modifications, to Banking, the Post Office, Public Health, Education, Mining, Engineering, and all the other industries and services.

The Guild State.

The economic functions in Society now in the hands of the private capitalists would be discharged by autonomous Guilds such as that described above, but the national economic relations of the Guilds would be regulated by a Guild Congress to which all the Guilds would send representatives. There are, however, a number of social services (e.g., education) not economic in character in which the ordinary man is interested not as a producer or consumer but as a citizen. In these services it is obvious that the direction of policy must be shared between the workers therein and the general body of interested citizens. The con-

sumer will also require adequate means of representing his desires. These things may necessitate some modification in our present Parliamentary and Local Government structure. Both would be greatly purified by the elimination of those economic considerations, which, under private capitalism, have proved such a corrupting influence in our politics. Both would tend to deal more with broader issues like foreign relations, education, and communal needs such as civic development, housing and public health, which are more properly the concern of political institutions.

It cannot be said of Guild Socialism, as it might perhaps be said of some Utopian socialist proposals, that it runs counter to human nature. On the other hand, it certainly does not tend, like modern commercialism, to degrade human nature, but rather to elevate it. Useful work would be the *sine qua non* of a living, much more effectively applied than it is at present, and motives such as pride in work and ambition to succeed therein would obviously have far greater scope than they have to-day. Sectional jealousies are a theoretical possibility, but would, no doubt, in practice tend to cancel one another out.

Most of the sectional disputes of to-day arise from the motive of self-preservation, but a social system which ensured just conditions of life and security to enjoy them would give rise to few differences which were not capable of local adjustment. For any larger disputes the Guild State would provide an atmosphere and modes of settlement far more favourable to general satisfaction than are conceivable under present capitalist conditions.

Without assuming that the transition to guild socialism would be as easy as it is to pen the foregoing, let us consider more in detail the position of the salaried worker as it might be either under the social order just briefly and inadequately sketched and under the most feasible of its alternatives, State Capitalism. A considerable section of the Labour movement, including most of its middle class adherents, has been greatly influenced by the doctrines of State Socialism, or Collectivism as it is sometimes more vaguely called. Superficially the theory of a democratically elected Parliament and local authorities beneficently managing all the affairs of the community was attractive by its simplicity. Closer examination of political democracy and of the realities of State control of industry, has, however, disillusioned many former State Socialists: two factors in particular have led to this: (1) a realisation of the total inadequacy of mere political democracy as a means to freedom in the office and the workshop and (2) a truer appreciation of the burden of the expropriated landlord and capitalist. State Socialism unfortunately lends itself to perversion in unscrupulous capitalist hands. The social tendencies to which it has given rise in the shape of improving the material conditions of the worker and of vesting economic power in the State may be adopted and its

vital spirit of communal service and just distribution may be altogether stultified. The salaried workers in at least two important public services, Education and the Post Office, have had sufficient experience of modified forms of State capitalism to enable them to understand the nature of its shortcomings. These are not wholly or even mainly concerned with salaries or conditions of employment, although it has been made abundantly clear that State or Municipal employment is no guarantee against underpayment or unsatisfactory working conditions. Civil servants and local government officers alike are learning the vital necessity of maintaining strong trade unions and professional organisations to protect their economic interests.

The most glaring defects of State management arise, however, from its bureaucratic character; control by political officers of the State inevitably entails (1) a subservient status and restriction of freedom for the professional, technical, and operative workers concerned, and (2) a rigidity of procedure which results in a diminished technical efficiency in the industry or service as a whole. It is true that many large industrial and commercial concerns, highly centralised, exhibit some of these defects and the salariat engaged in such businesses would not lose much by the transfer to State control and might gain a little by greater security of tenure. This, however, is only true of a few, and indeed of them it is only a half-truth. The general institution of state capitalism would undoubtedly have a profoundly adverse influence on the status of the salariat in all industries and services. The salariat functions most efficiently when there is ample scope for personal and group initiative and experiment and when the staff has a large responsibility and an intelligent appreciation for the work in hand. These conditions are notoriously and necessarily absent from the highly centralised management of the State in which the rule of the established hierarchy and the fear of departing from precedent effectually block the way to freedom and to progress. This is not to say that the existing civil service given democratic control would not be thoroughly competent and render valuable service to the community in purely civil administration.

The Issue before the Salaried Worker.

The salariat, as I indicated earlier in this pamphlet, do not form a coherent body, and their action in any given circumstances cannot therefore be prophesied. So important, however, is the weight of their influence in the imminent—indeed present—social crisis that it is necessary to emphasise the nature of the choice before them. Co-operation with the capitalists either in endeavours to avert the collapse of capitalism or to transfer its liabilities to the State may be seriously considered as one alternative. The adoption of this alternative would carry with it such grave implications, however, that any member of the salariat might

well ask himself—for what good? The fundamental economic weakness of private capitalism, the subservient and ill-required position of the salariat in its service, and the obvious injustice of its results on all classes would be adequate enough reasons for its dissolution. But these reasons must be reinforced in the mind of any salaried worker who stops to think by the reflection that such a choice would inevitably be taken as a declaration of war on the manual working classes and would make the salariat the allies of the best hated and least worthy class in the community, hired mercenaries protecting the unjust privileges and ill-gotten gains of capitalism. Such a combination could never be a possibility but for the social distinction and misunderstandings which divide the two sections of the working Community.

There is a great wall of prejudice between manual worker and professional man, for which both are partly responsible and which will take much interchange of information and ideas and sharing of joint responsibility to break down. Happily there are signs of a better understanding. The crude realities of capitalism made manifest by the war have led many members of the salariat to a better understanding of the labour point of view and to look with greater sympathy at modes of organisation and of thought among the manual workers formerly regarded with disdain or active antagonism. Equally, on the other hand, has the growth of professional organisation, the reduction of snobbishness, and the increased frequency of mutual consultation and joint action lessened the suspicion and hostility of the manual worker to the salaried classes. Neither side has yet arrived, however, at that frank recognition of the value and indispensability of the other which is essential to a sound understanding and cordial joint working. It is very necessary therefore for the salariat to strengthen its organisation and to formulate more clearly the terms on which it will co-operate and where desirable amalgamate with the manual workers organisations. The basis of this is already being laid, not only in the National Federation previously referred to, but also in the agreements which are now being concluded by professional associations between themselves and also with manual workers in their several industries. The present social crisis may well hasten the consummation of this better relationship between the two divisions of the socially useful community.

The substitution of National Guilds for decaying capitalism is a constructive task in which workers of both types may well combine on equal terms and with a great social purpose, but much depends upon whether the salariat has the vision and the courage to grasp the opportunity.

We have seen the blank prospect for the salariat under either private or State capitalism. What has Guild Socialism to offer the salariat? Economic security, freedom, and opportunity for

self-expression in one's work, the fullest scope for ambition and ability, the sense of social service. It means the assurance of an adequate income, and the cessation of worry as to provision for old age, for sickness, and other domestic concerns. It means the assertion of a new human dignity in the office, in the laboratory, and behind the counter. The bank clerk will cease to be "merely a clerk," and become a recognised self-governing unit in the Banking Guild. The chemist, the engineer and the architect will have scope for originality in research and design, assured that their skill and labours will not only be justly rewarded but will benefit the community and cease to be exploited by a privileged few. Education will no longer be restricted by merely commercial motives and necessities and the teacher will be free to work out educational schemes which aim at the natural development and fullest self-expression of the new generation. These are considerations which the salariat should specially appreciate.

The professional and technical worker is vaguely looking out for some means of realising the conception which increasingly comes to him of a higher status in a humaner and juster social order than the one we live in. It is the design of this little pamphlet to indicate how that higher status and juster social order may be achieved—by National Guilds.

Let us sum up and conclude. The Guild Idea, otherwise expressed as Guild Socialism, avoids the inevitable economic weakness of Private Capitalism without suffering the loss of personal initiative and industrial freedom associated with State Capitalism. Like State Capitalism, it is based on existing institutions and can be attained without catastrophic change: equally again it would involve a revolutionary change in the status of labour, wage earning and salaried, but whereas in the case of State Capitalism this change would be to the degradation of the worker, in the case of Guild Socialism it would be to the greater freedom and self-expression of the worker.

The black-coated worker is thus at the cross-roads of modern society. Will he take the one road, with the capitalist, towards the Servile State; or will he take the other road, with his horny-handed fellow-worker, towards the Guild Commonwealth?

J. HENRY LLOYD.

For a fuller explanation of National Guild principles than can be given in a pamphlet the reader is recommended to read the following books:—

National Guilds—S. G. Hobson—6/-.

The World of Labour—G. D. H. Cole—5/-.

Self-Government in Industry—G. D. H. Cole—5/-.

The Meaning of National Guilds—M. B. Reckitt & C. E. Bechhofer—8/6.

Labour in the Commonwealth—G. D. H. Cole—5/6.

Postage extra in each case.

The following pamphlets may also be of interest:—

The Policy of Guild Socialism—8d.

Guild Socialism—G. D. H. Cole—2½d.

Short Statement of Principles and Objects of the National Guilds League—1½d.

Workers' Control in Industry—G. D. H. Cole—2½d.

Towards a National Railway Guild—3d.

The Call of the Guild of Builders—3d.

The Building Guild (Manchester)—8d.

Education and the Guilds—8d.

Trade Unionism for Clerks—J. Henry Lloyd and R. E. Scouller—3½d.

Prices include postage.

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